

PARENTS' GUIDE TO OPUS DEI



J. J. M. GARVEY

"A God-send many families"

Praise for the "Parents' Guide to Opus Dei"

"I have read [the *Parents' Guide*] thoroughly and commend you for a job well done. You know that I do not use the word 'cult' with reference to Opus Dei. It is under Church authority and we are presently in frequent contact in the hope they will change their ways. However, you know too, that I completely agree that strong arm tactics, manipulation and control are used [in Opus Dei]."

—Rev. James J. LeBar,
National Consultant on Cults,
Office of Cult Awareness,
Archdiocese of New York

"The '*Parents' Guide to Opus Dei*' is one of the best books written about any cult. An important tool to wake up Catholic thinking. The production of this booklet I see as the work of God, a wonderful piece of work, so necessary."

— Rev. Walter Debold,
Asst. Professor of World Religions,
Seton Hall University,
Interfaith Coalition of
Concern About Cults (ICCC)

"Many, many thanks for sending me a copy of [the] *'Parents' Guide to Opus Dei*. I am sure that your booklet will help erase a lot of gray areas in the minds of many parents and guardians about the organization and practices of this particular religious movement. All the best!"

—Mme. Corazon C. Aquino,
President of the Philippines

"I found [the *Parents' Guide*] to be well written and revealing. It will be an excellent reference, and a source of referrals, a God-send for many families. I join you in your hope that our Holy Father will come to see the necessity for change in this group."

—Rev. Kent Burtner, O.P.,
*National Consultant on Cults,
Winner, 1983 Leo J. Ryan Award
for contributions in the field
of cult awareness*

"Your work is so accurate and so well done I had to write you immediately to congratulate you. I agree with everything you say. We [have] a large group of former numerary members, more than a hundred in Guatemala alone. You can count on our support for your wonderful initiative. [The Guide] is a stupendous project and headed in precisely the right direction. My congratulations again."

—Prof. Carlos Alex Olivares,
*Former Opus Dei numerary
member of 22 years*

"You are to be commended and held up in honor! God be praised for what you have done. Your [booklet] could not be a better exposition in a very short format."

—Rev. David Turner, O.S.B., Ph.D.,
Illinois Benedictine College

**PARENTS'
GUIDE
TO
OPUS DEI**

J.J.M. GARVEY

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PARENTS' GUIDE TO OPUS DEI

An analysis of Opus Dei according to criteria provided in the Vatican's "Challenge of New Religious Movements (Sects or Cults)", May 7, 1986, a joint progress report issued by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, the Secretariat for Non-Christians, the Secretariat for Non-Believers, and the Pontifical Council for Culture.

"The first law of history is not to dare to utter falsehood; the second, not to fear to speak the truth."

His Holiness Pope Leo XIII



INTRODUCTION

WHY A PARENT'S GUIDE TO OPUS DEI?

The contributors to this Guide are Catholics, parents and others, who attempt in every way to be loyal to their Church, its Pope, and its teaching Magisterium. We are concerned about religious vocations, our children's and others', which we see as extraordinary blessings from God. According to a pastoral warning from the Vatican, May 1986, these vocations — as well as the normal lives of many young people — are facing a real and growing threat from aggressive new religious movements using hidden and manipulative recruiting methods. This guide is written specifically to provide parents and their young with information they will need to evaluate, according to Vatican guidelines, one of these groups, *The Sacerdotal Society of the Holy Cross and the Work of God*, or as it is known more widely, *Opus Dei*, "The Work of God."

The Vatican guidelines are contained in the pastoral letter "Challenge of New Religious Movements (Sects or Cults)," May 7, 1986, which outlines the widespread problem of new religious groups, both within and outside the Church. Listed in the Vatican document are the characteristics of destructive sects, specifically their procedures for recruitment, training, and indoctrination. "[Since] the attitudes and methods of some [groups] can be destructive to personalities, disruptive of families and society . . . it is necessary to inform the faithful, especially the young, to put them on their guard (4.3)." Pastors and all teaching authorities concerned are urged to study these characteristics so that they can help Catholics, especially parents and their progeny, to avoid

the psychological and spiritual damage of cult involvement.

The Vatican report also advises us that "from experience we know there is generally little or no possibility of dialogue with these new religious movements (4.4)." For Catholic parents of the Ad Hoc Alliance, whose children summarily left home after surreptitiously becoming members of Opus Dei, that statement is of particular poignance, confirming as it does painful personal experience. Public statements to the contrary, the alienation of children from their natural families is a phenomenon that is reported wherever Opus Dei operates.

Active in North and South America, Europe, parts of Africa, and Asia, Opus Dei originated in Spain. Lately it has risen to some prominence within the Roman Catholic Church. Its founder, Monsignor Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, who is called "Our Father," and "the Father," wrote: "Our Lord gave rise to Opus Dei in 1928 to remind Christians that, as we read in the Book of Genesis, God created man to work."¹ Like many things in Opus Dei, this is slightly different from, and possibly contradictory to, that which Catholics learn from their official catechisms: God created us to know, love, and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him in the next.

The association's purpose, as stated in the *Annuario Pontificio* of Vatican City, is: "to foster in the middle of the world the search for full christian[sic] maturity among people of all social classes, especially among intellectuals." Unlike the great Orders of the Church, each of which arose to answer a particular need at a particular time, its founder claims that "Opus Dei sprang up all at once with a universal spirit for all times and all centuries."² According to Monsignor Escriva, members should be compared to the early Christians in order to be understood:

¹From *Opus Dei—A Close-up*, J.J. Thierry, (New York: Courtland Press, 505 5th Avenue, New York City, NY 10017, 1975, Preamble, p.9).

²Ibid., p. 12.

Externally they [the early Christians] did nothing to distinguish themselves from their fellow citizens. The members of Opus Dei are ordinary people. They work like everyone else and live in the midst of the world just as they did before they joined. There is nothing false or artificial about their behavior. They live like all those christian [sic] citizens who want to respond fully to the demands of their faith, because that is what they are.³

Catholic parents have found that description of Opus Dei members to be untrue. Those of their sons and daughters who have become members do not act as ordinary people, nor do they live and work in the world just as they did before they joined. Their actions appear stilted and artificial, and their responses seem calculated to keep formerly intimate parents and family members at a distance. Normal family communications have been significantly distorted. Furthermore, parents can get no vital information from Opus Dei spokesmen about this change in personality and behavior, or about whether the Church's policy of "full-capacity informed consent"⁴ was followed when their children joined this "free association of lay people" as it is referred to by some.

Indeed, responses to parental inquiries by Opus Dei spokesmen in every country suggest a thoroughly indoctrinated, institutionalized policy of concealment. Samples of frequent replies are:

- "parents don't understand Opus Dei;"
- "if parents are upset it's because they don't wish their children to have religious vocations;"
- "critics are not knowledgeable about Opus Dei;"

³*Conversations*, by Escriva de Balaguer, J-M, Shannon, Ecclesia Press, 1972, n. 24.

⁴Vatican pastoral letter, *Challenge of New Religious Movements*, (5/7/86) (2.2.1), "The sects often impose their own norms of thinking, feeling and behaving. This is in contrast to the Church's approach, which implies full-capacity informed consent."

- "the Pope approves, therefore complaints and inquiries are out of order;"
- "it's an isolated case of overzealousness on the part of an individual member, not a policy of Opus Dei" (referring to any clear case of recruiting coercion, or some violation of personal, parental, or family rights);
- "any persons giving negative reports of Opus Dei are probably allied with heretics and/or enemies of the Church."

These responses, by their rote-like and universal repetition, quite clearly serve Opus Dei spokesmen as thought-stopping platitudes. They are not meant to lead to exchanges of meaningful information, as we hope this Guide will show. Those parents whose children are suddenly no longer communicating as they used to, or who suddenly cannot come home for any of the normal family functions (such as vacations, birthdays, weddings, and First Holy Communions), are devastated when they discover what is happening: the family bond of trusting love is being deliberately and surreptitiously severed. A great, hidden, and carefully planned effort is intruding upon and usurping their parental rights and their children's family loyalties. And usually, because of their trust in the Church, they are caught totally by surprise.

To understand how this could occur, information is needed. But, because of the fundamental structure and policies of Opus Dei, that information is made difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. An example: the governing statutes and constitutions of Opus Dei are not made available to anyone except bishops in whose sees Opus Dei functions. A biographer selected by Opus Dei, Jean-Jacques Thierry, writes:

Consisting of 479 Articles divided among four chapters, these constitutions, along with the instructions already published or to be published in the future, and together with everything that concerns the government of the Work, *are not to be divulged*. Further, according to Article 193, "without

the Father's [Escriva's or current Head's] permission, those [parts] drawn up in Latin shall not [even] be translated into vernacular languages."⁵

More recently, in 1986, through the efforts of a former member, the 479 Articles were published by *TIEMPO* magazine in Madrid. Under the title *Constituciones, Sacerdotal Sociedad de la Santa Cruz de la Obra de Dios, Roma, 1950* (Constitutions, Priestly Society of the Holy Cross of the Work of God, 1950), these constitutions appeared with the up-dated statutes, *Los Estatutos Secretos Del Opus Dei, 1982* (Secret Statutes of Opus Dei, 1982), in the original Latin with a Spanish translation. The policy of concealing basic operating principles is termed "privacy," or "discretion." Opus Dei spokesmen in public forums state that there are no secrets in Opus Dei.⁶ However, Catholics who expect Catholic groups to "say 'yes' for 'yes', and 'no' for 'no', [for] whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one (Matt. 5:37)," find the distinction made between privacy and secrecy in this case to be deliberate deception. By any name, Opus Dei is an unusually defensive organization, whose members generally react to criticism by attacking the critic personally, by denying all charges, and by answering as if the Church were accused, not Opus Dei.⁷

⁵*Opus Dei—a Close-up*, pp. 51, 52.

⁶"That cloak of secrecy surrounding Opus Dei ... I think that's caused by the people outside of Opus Dei, but not by Opus Dei itself. Because in Opus Dei, there are no secrets whatsoever" (Fr. Gregory Haddock, OD priest, CBC-TV interview, 1/22/85). Also, the confusing statement of the founder, "I have never needed anything secret. The members of the Work detest secrecy because they are the ordinary faithful, the same as anyone else" (Msgr. Escriva, interview with J. Guilleme-Brulton, *Le Figaro*, 5/16/66).

⁷Russell Shaw, after publication of a parent's complaint that members have incoming mail read and discussed by Opus Dei authorities, without the sender's knowledge or consent, said: "Opus Dei is plainly disinclined to expose its internal affairs to curiosity seekers and those with malicious intent." (*The National Catholic Register*, 8/10/87, p.4).

Sad to say, Opus Dei is also "an organization which, however noble the founder's intentions and high the original aspirations, has lately been motivated in practice by fear rather than love," according to former member Father Vladimir Felzmann, now a parish priest in London. Father Felzmann stated to the *Irish Times* (letter to editor, 11 November 1982) that he had resigned in 1981 after twenty-two years "because of the symptoms of fear in Opus Dei, which create an atmosphere to which I could not [any longer] recruit members."

Our experience as Catholic parents can be summed up accurately by a statement made during an interview on Canadian television by Father Jim MacDonald, parish priest of Pierrefond, Montreal, Canada, himself an uncle of boys surreptitiously recruited.

It [the Opus Dei movement] takes over the parental role in the lives of children very early, and very gradually, and in an undercover kind of way . . . this is certainly nefarious. Now there may be parents who got involved in it themselves . . . who don't feel this is the case. But for parents who don't get involved in it themselves and buy the whole thing, it [Opus Dei] will eventually come between them and their children.⁸

Our Lady and St. Joseph In Search of the Lost Child, an Ad Hoc Alliance to Defend the 4th Commandment (AHA), is a support group of and for parents and families (Appendix I). Our families have been deeply hurt by clandestine Opus Dei recruitment and training. Over the past decade AHA has collected information about Opus Dei from France, Germany, Spain, Latin America, England, Ireland, Canada, and the United States. Documentation for this Parents' Guide comes primarily from the writings and statements of Opus Dei officials, especially of the Founder, as well as the statements of former members, and the

⁸CBC-TV, 1/22/85, "The Fifth Estate: Work of God?"

experiences reported by families of both members and former members. Gathered here are quotations from the Constitutions (1950) and Statutes (1982) of Opus Dei, with selections from *The Way* (the Founder's book of spiritual sayings), and from "Cronica," an internal newsletter of Opus Dei. Quoted at length, as well, are an official "biography" of Opus Dei by commissioned spokesman Jean-Jacques Thierry and an Opus Dei recruiting manual, "Vocation," by Monsignor J.L. Soria, former head of Opus Dei, Canada.

The writings of John Paul II and other popes on the family and on related Church doctrine are quoted as references when Opus Dei policy is in obvious opposition.

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PART ONE

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DESTRUCTIVE NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS (according to Vatican guidelines)

The Vatican's guidelines describe destructive groups as "generally authoritarian in structure," and note that "they exercise forms of brainwashing and mind control [i.e., control over opinions and attitudes], they cultivate group pressure, and instill feelings of guilt and fear" (1.1). The Pastoral Report (*Osservatore Romano*, no. 20, 19 May 1986) continues:

Some recruitment, training techniques, and indoctrination procedures, practised by a number of sects and cults, which often are highly sophisticated, partly account for their success. Those most often attracted by such measures are those who, firstly, do not know that the approach is staged, and, secondly, who are unaware of the nature of the contrived conversion and training methods (the social and psychological manipulation) to which they are subjected. The sects often impose their own norms of thinking, feeling, and behaving. This is in contrast to the Church's approach which implies full-capacity informed consent. (2.2)

Quite clearly, the phenomenal rise of new religious movements can be attributed to the depersonalizing structures of contemporary society. Lacking a strong parish involvement, many find that their needs and aspirations are not being met in the mainline churches. The success of the new movements stems from their claims to meet those various needs and aspirations, as well as from their deceptive recruiting methods.

At first, most recruits do not even suspect that they are being recruited. Ignorance of

the staged approach and of the manipulative methods is the dangerous condition to which the Report addresses itself. Today, unfortunately, common sense must dictate that all persons beware a sudden flattering interest by new "friends."

THE GENERAL APPROACH

The Pastoral Letter says the approach techniques "are often a combination of *affection* and *deception* [which] proceed from a positive approach." Since few people join a sect for evil reasons, the greatest opportunity for the sects to grow is through good people and their good motivations. It is only gradually that the recruiting methods achieve a type of mind control [i.e., thoughts and opinions] by means of abusive behavior modification techniques.

People turn to sects, says the Report, in crisis situations and under other conditions in which they are emotionally and spiritually vulnerable. Their motivations, particularly during adolescence, are easily exploited. Destructive sects, on their part, can use refined methods to create within a normal person psychological/spiritual problems for which the sects then become the only, and lifelong, solution.

Nine categories of needs and aspirations are listed in the Report, along with what the sects seem to offer in response. But the report makes clear that the recruiting and training characteristics also listed pose clear threats to personal freedom and to society. A point by point comparison of Opus Dei's characteristics with the Vatican's list follows.

CHARACTERISTIC ONE: "*a subtle process of introduction . . . gradual discovery of the real host*", along with THE GENERAL APPROACH: "*deception and affection*;"

Articles 190 and 191 of the concealed Opus Dei Constitutions require members NOT to reveal their membership or the membership of others to "outsiders."⁹ Discouraged as well

⁹Article 190: "Belonging to Opus Dei does not entail any outward manifestation, and the number of members

(in fact, forbidden) are any attempts by members to make people, even "holy people" (parents included), understand their way, their "vocation."¹⁰ Silence about the Work is strongly urged upon all members, and is termed "discretion."¹¹

Therefore, newcomers to Opus Dei activities (which are rarely labelled as such) seldom know who is which kind of member, and who is a visitor-guest. Throughout Opus Dei a subtle false witness from members is encouraged, which conceals much in the picture presented to newcomers. This deception extends to many other activities with the misleading explanation that a member's "witness is lived, not necessarily proclaimed."¹²

is to be concealed from outsiders; better still, our members should not discuss these matters with outsiders."

Article 191: "numeraries [full members] and supernumeraries [married and others] must be convinced of the need to maintain prudent silence regarding the names of other members and never reveal to anyone the fact that they belong to Opus Dei" (*Constituciones, Sociedad Sacerdotal de la Santa Cruz de la Obra de Dios, Roma, 1950*, published with *Los Estatutos Secretos Del Opus Dei, 1982*, by *Tiempo* magazine, Madrid. 1986).

¹⁰Maxim 650, *The Way*, by the Founder, Msgr. Escriva: "There are many people, holy people, who don't understand your way. Don't strive to make them understand. It would be a waste of time and would give rise to indiscretions."

¹¹Among many such (Maxims 639–657), Maxim 639, *The Way*: "Remain silent, and you will never regret it. Speak, and you often will."

Maxim 644: "Be silent! Don't forget that your ideal [your vocation in the Work] is like a newly-lit flame. A single breath might be enough to put it out in your heart."

¹²One small example: Russell Shaw, long-time member of Opus Dei and writer of many promotional pieces about Opus Dei, wrote this in a laudatory column about Opus Dei Founder, Msgr. Jose-Maria Escriva, in the *National Catholic Register*, 8/10/87. He also accused the critics of Opus Dei of not "bothering to learn much about it," and recommended a recent book. At no time did he identify himself as an Opus Dei member of long standing, nor did he mention that the author of the new book was a long-time Opus Dei member, and that the book was published by Opus Dei publisher Scepter Press. The *Register* identified Shaw only as "secretary for public affairs at the U.S. Catholic Conference."

CHARACTERISTIC TWO: *use of "overpowering techniques: 'love-bombing', etc."*

Opus Dei members are trained in a recruiting technique called the "the path of friendship and/or friendship and confidence."¹³ According to Jean-Jacques Thierry the international residences are the chief source of recruits. However, all Opus Dei schools, hostels, clubs, cultural centers, catering colleges, universities, university residences, publishing houses, etc., are recruiting centers,¹⁴ rarely identified openly with Opus Dei. "[I]t just so happens" that they are financed, staffed and run by members, but not "legally" owned by Opus Dei the organization.¹⁵

The International residences are located on prestigious streets in wealthy areas, usually near universities. In them the Saturday (or Sunday) meditation and Benediction is followed by a staged "get-together" for visitors. This carefully orchestrated atmosphere provides members with the opportunity to "chat" with prospective recruits, who don't know they are being screened. Essential to the ambience is the flattering attention paid to newcomers ("love-bombing").¹⁶ "The atmosphere of the House echoes with laughter, whistling, 'macho' behavior [or 'ingenue-ish', for young ladies], and good-humored raillery intended to delight the visitors,"¹⁷ all seem-

¹³J.J. Thierry, *Opus Dei—A Close-up* (New York: Courtland Press, 1975), p. 76.

¹⁴"Winning Recruits in Opus Dei: a Personal Experience," by Dr. J.J. Roche, Oxford University, in *The Clergy Review* LXX (Oct. 85): 349: "The primary purpose, therefore, of all of Opus Dei's [corporate activities] is the recruitment into Opus Dei of those who attend." Dr. Roche resigned, after fourteen years in Opus Dei, to return to Oxford University.

¹⁵Fr. Philip Sherrington, Regional Counsellor of Opus Dei, England, BBC-TV, 3/19/81, commenting on the fact that the entire board of Netherhall Educational Association, which is listed as owner of many properties where Opus Dei activities are held, were Opus Dei numeraries.

¹⁶"Winning Recruits," p. 354: "The [recruit] finds himself the center of smiling, humorous, and affectionate attention, etc."

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 352.

ingly natural, but carefully organized and with a hidden agenda.

"The single most important activity in the life of any member of Opus Dei is recruitment or 'proselytism.'"¹⁸ Monsignor Josemaria Escriva, the Founder, emphasized this requirement repeatedly.¹⁹ Efforts are directed toward any accomplished person, any seriously committed and active Catholic, any young and older professional. The major effort, however, is directed toward recruiting teenagers as numeraries, that is, full, celibate members. This is largely facilitated by other teenagers or members in their early twenties.²⁰

Recruitment is elaborately structured and carefully directed despite the Founder's frequent public assertions to the contrary.²¹ The object of most apostolic contacts is "to persuade each person involved to visit a local centre of the Work, so that [Opus Dei] can form them."²²

Members are assigned to "work on" re-

¹⁸Ibid., p. 349.

¹⁹Ibid.: "Notes: There is enormous literature in Opus Dei relating to proselytism, including special 'letters of the father', manuals, and recorded talks by the Founder." Also, *The Way*, (Scepter, Dublin, 1953) nos. 790–812; 'Tactics', nos. 831–851; 'The Apostle', nos. 929–959; 'The Apostolate', nos. 960–982; see also M. Moreno, *El Opus Dei: anexo a una historia*, (Planeta, Barcelona, 1976), 26; 217–223; File B.

²⁰Ibid., p. 350; also *Cronica* (1962), "The seed bed of the Work."

²¹*Conversations With Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer*, Scepter Press, Dublin, 1968, p. 31: "... in our apostolate we give primary and fundamental importance to the spontaneity of the individual ... and not to organizational structures, commands and tactics imposed from above ... all the activity is directed fundamentally to one task: to provide the members with the spiritual assistance necessary for their life of piety ... And then, *off you go!*" Compare with: "We do not have any other aim than the corporate one — proselytism, winning vocations" (the Founder, *Cronica v*, 1963).

²²"Winning Recruits in Opus Dei," note #39 *Cronica i*, 1963; *Cn.i*, 1967: "our apostolic zeal will ordinarily show itself by putting our friends into contact with the apostolates of the Work." Also, *Cronica vii*, 1968: "None of my children can rest satisfied if he doesn't win four or five faithful vocations each year."

cruits aggressively. Weekly "chats," regular telephone calls, visits when sick, letters when on holiday, birthday cards filled with amusing remarks by the numeraries at the center, will follow in the name of "friendship."²³ Some of those being pursued report that even insults seem not to discourage the pursuit. Guilt is instilled in sensitive youth who, although they are offended by the overbearing and unnatural pressure, are made to feel awkward for refusing to attend "Catholic" activities.

The explanation for this aggressive and inconsiderate pursuit can be found in the Founder's admonitions: "go out to the highways and byways and push those whom you find to come and fill my house; push them. . . . We must be a little crazy . . . you must kill yourselves for proselytism²⁴ . . . go to the best . . . without being afraid to interfere in the lives of others."²⁵

CHARACTERISTIC THREE: *"ready-made answers and decisions being almost forced upon the recruits"*

Under the persuasive influence of "get-togethers" and "circles," recruits (as young as twelve) are gradually encouraged to unfold their private and personal lives for "fraternal correction" and "formation." [Later it will be the mandatory weekly "confidences."] At the same time as Catholic doctrine is taught, the "spirit of Opus Dei" is inculcated and extolled, the unchanging way to sanctity as laid down by the Founder. In this teaching, tried and true ways of being Roman Catholic are not presented (see footnote 27). Each recruit is given daily "norms" to fulfill, which train him rigorously in the group's way of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Maxims in the Foun-

²³The Founder, *Cronica i*, 1967: "With holy shrewdness, always respecting their freedom, we have to push them little by little, but constantly without haste and without pausing . . . You must use everything because everything is a means of apostolate . . . what [you] are doing is the highest form of friendship."

²⁴The Founder, *Cronica iv*, 1971.

²⁵The Founder, *Cronica iv*, 1964.

der's book *The Way* are driven home, especially those directing silence with outsiders (Maxims 639–656) and obedience (Maxim 936: "You have come to submit, to annihilate yourself"; Maxim 941: "Obedience the sure way. Blind obedience the way of sanctity.")

Yet, in public forums Opus Dei spokesmen say the opposite: "Our Founder was most insistent on the fact that we all exercise personal freedom — with responsibility, of course. And so we do. We love freedom. We live a life of freedom."²⁶

CHARACTERISTICS FOUR AND FIVE: *the use of "flattery"; and control through the "distribution of money, [and/or] medicine"*

The flattering attention paid to initiates has already been mentioned.

The distribution of money is a practice among numeraries who have signed over their salaries to an account to which they are not signatory. They are doled out an allowance according to their professional status, for which they are strictly accountable. In this fashion medical and dental care can be controlled as well. What is initially a generous act on the part of a member effectively forfeits material freedom and establishes a controlling dependence upon superiors.

CHARACTERISTIC SIX: *the "requirement of unconditional surrender to the initiator, leader"*

Mention has already been made of the Founder's Maxim 941: "Obedience the sure way. Blind obedience to your superior the way of sanctity. Obedience in your apostolate the only way, for in a work of God, the spirit must be to obey or to leave." Mention should also be made here of Maxim 614: "In apostolic work there is no such thing as a trifling dis-

²⁶Opus Dei priest, Fr. Gregory Haddock, CBC-TV, "5th Estate," 1/22/85.

obedience," and Maxim 617: "Obey, as an instrument obeys in the hands of the artist — not stopping to consider the why and the wherefore of what it is doing, etc."

Blind obedience here must be carefully distinguished from blind faith. Blind faith is appropriate to the profound, unknowable mysteries of our Holy Catholic Religion. We are, after all, those who believe although we have not seen.

But blind (unthinking) obedience, on the other hand, is appropriate to no human being, or human institution, as the Jim Jones mass suicide has proven. To have merit, Christian obedience should be the conscious, humble, and responsible act of an informed will. Never should it be merely unthinking submission. Traditional asceticism, formulated for life in monastic situations, has been deformed in Opus Dei, possibly because of the large number of poorly trained lay "spiritual directors." Since the function of spiritual director is so intimately related to the office of confessor, this is cause for grave concern. Canon 630 of the Church's *Codex Juris Canonici* expressly forbids any person who is not a priest, even religious superiors, to probe into matters of conscience. The great saints Catherine of Siena, Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, and Ignatius Loyola before ordination, are the rare exceptions that prove the rule.

CHARACTERISTIC SEVEN: *the use of "Isolation: control of the rational thinking process, elimination of outside information and influence (family, friends, newspapers, etc.) which might break the spell of involvement and the process of absorption of feelings and attitudes and patterns of behavior."*

This point is probably the most important one for parents. All other points of view must be cancelled out in order for proselytising to take effect. Under the covering blanket of Catholic instruction the unique worldview of Opus Dei, the "spirit of Opus Dei", is taught

at every opportunity as the (only) correct version of Catholicism.²⁷

From the very beginning, recruits are culled from their families into peer groups for their weekly "circles": elementary school students, high school students, college groups, people in their late twenties to early thirties, etc. They are to attend obediently and humbly in the role of "disciples who come to listen to a teacher. They do not argue. . . . Without the nuisance of a chorus of spectators it is easy to help them."²⁸

Isolating them further one by one within these carefully circumscribed "circles," the "spiritual director" (a lay numerary) indoctrinates the younger recruits in four ways:²⁹ first, by winning their confidence; second, by projecting a highly attractive image of Opus Dei (which counters criticism); third, by establishing regular spiritual direction and confession with an Opus Dei priest; and fourth, by directing the adoption of the all-important "plan of life."

According to former priest-member Father Vladimir Felzmann, "They, [Opus Dei spiritual directors] would gradually develop this plan of life . . . prayers, rosary, spiritual reading, Mass, Holy Communion, etc., mental prayer. And then from that you'd gradually get closer and closer until the spiritual director and the child were very, very close — symbiotic almost — so that if the older person said you should, it was very difficult for the child to say no."³⁰

²⁷"The possibility of a vocation to any other religious organization is never raised. Indeed, a parallel development is to gradually present the rest of the Church as suspect." ("Winning Recruits," p. 353).

²⁸"Apostolic Dialogue," *Cronica* (1965).

²⁹"Winning Recruits," p. 352.

³⁰Fr. Felzmann, former Opus Dei priest, now a parish priest in London, on CBC-TV, 1/22/85. Citing the reasons he resigned from OD in 1981, he named especially: a pervading atmosphere of fear, alienation of the young from their families, intense and meticulous suspicion of "outside" Catholic theology, and "a de facto separation from, and suspicion of the world which (contrarily) the spirit of Opus Dei encourages everyone to love." *Irish Times*, 11/11/82.

The plan of life is shared only with the recruiter/"spiritual director" and with the Opus Dei confessor, never with parents or outside priest-confessors. It becomes the basis of an intense intimacy through which the recruit can be manipulated, by suggestion more than by direct order. Eventually it is used to provoke the vocational crisis. The Founder encourages members that the method works: "In the beginning it is difficult for them . . . to tell in the confidence of younger (numeraries) their little secrets and worries of all kinds [but] afterwards, they need [to do] it."³¹

All Catholic instruction comes from Opus Dei-approved texts and is interpreted exclusively by Opus Dei teachers, at times slanted to Opus Dei ends.³² Reading material and information from TV and news carriers is carefully monitored. Personal mail from family and friends is read by the spiritual director and discussed with the recruit, without the knowledge or consent of the sender,³³ in order to keep it from interrupting the ingestion of the "new family's" way of life.

CHARACTERISTIC EIGHT: *"processing recruits away from their past lives; focusing on past deviant behavior, such as drug use, sexual misdeeds; playing upon*

³¹The Founder, *Cronica* (1963).

³²An example of biased (private) instruction (publicly denied) used to shape impressionable minds is the Opus Dei interpretation of the Finding of the Boy Jesus in the Temple. From a recruit's notes we read: "He [Jesus] allowed His parents to suffer [before announcing His mission]. "From then on, Jesus obeyed them, within limits, He allowed them to take care of Him, just as He allows us to take care of Him in the sanctuaries in the world." Finally, the underlined statement, "When God enters the picture, parents' rights cease."

In contrast, we repeat how John Paul II sums up the Church's historical perception of this mystery: "Here is Jesus, who returns to Nazareth and is obedient to them, to Mary and Joseph. That obedience signifies filial obedience, but also, at the same time, an obedient opening to humanity, which always needs to learn, above all in the family." *Osservatore Romano* 766, 26/12/82.

³³Personal testimony of members to their parents in Ad Hoc Alliance.

psychological hang-ups, poor social relationships, etc.”;

Against an idealized version of Catholic living (the “spirit of Opus Dei”), aggressive recruiters can easily instill guilt and fear into idealistic young Catholics. By subtly misusing the normal avenues of Catholic spiritual perfection (i.e., the plan of life, confession, prayers, and — only if needed — special spiritual direction), great psychological pressure can be exerted. Sometimes, with the help of privileged private knowledge of the state of their souls, it can be made unbearable.³⁴ It takes extraordinary self-possession to resist when such an authority “suggests” that one has a vocation to Opus Dei³⁵ and “predicts” that, because of it, both recruit and parents will be “upset.”³⁶ It is hard to refuse the strong “hint” to be silent because “parents don’t understand,”³⁷ or to question the blatant state-

³⁴Frequent testimony of former members: following absolution but still within the confessional, a “chat” is suggested, along personal lines. Later, the lay “spiritual director” reveals an awareness of this “chat” knowledge, which the penitent assumed to be under the seal of confession.

³⁵“One can ask to become a member of Opus Dei, or else at the suggestion of one of its members, the Work itself approaches possible candidates and suggests they become part of it.” J.J. Thierry, *Opus Dei—A Close-Up*, p. 76.

³⁶“... it is true to say that every vocation is a difficult one, and is bound to meet plenty of hostility, from within the soul itself and from the surrounding atmosphere.” Recruiting manual, *Vocation*, J.L. Soria (head, Opus Dei, Canada), Scepter Booklets, 505 5th Ave., NYC, NY 10017, p. 35. Also published by Tamezin Publications (#10), 2 Chelsea Embankment, London SW3.

³⁷“In some cases when a youngster says he wants to join we do advise them [sic] not to tell their parents. This is because parents do not understand us.” (Rev. Andrew Byrne, Opus Dei priest, *London Daily Mail*, 1/7/81). Also, Opus Dei priest, Fr. J.A. Kelly, regarding youngsters seventeen and under, advises them, “Say only what they’re doing at the moment, ‘I go to Mass daily, I pray the Rosary regularly’” [rather than inform parents of their plans to join OD]. “To let parents object [know] would rather violate the freedom of the boy.” (*New York Times*, 1/8/84).

ment that "Our Lord has called us from all eternity and to all eternity. Difficulties ought not to matter. There should be no stubborn resistance to this radical decision . . . even though it may scatter, like a house of cards, all the plans and dreams that person, or his family and friends, had for the future."³⁸

CHARACTERISTIC NINE: *the use of "consciousness-altering methods leading to cognitive disturbances (intellectual bombardment); use of thought-stopping cliches, and a closed system of logic; reflective thinking restricted"*

Under such intense proselytising pressure, control of all information reaching recruits is crucial. Maxims in "The Way" teach that silence and blind obedience are the rule. The vocation handbook states that "an inner silence, obtained by keeping a guard on our sight, our curiosity, and our imagination, is needed" to hear the call of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ "[T]he excuse of a lack of understanding . . . implies a truly diabolical temptation to grow cold on purpose." This or any "real resistance to the action of the Holy Spirit . . . can have very serious consequences."⁴⁰

"John, Peter and Judas. These three represent three ways of responding to a vocation.

³⁸Recruiting manual, *Vocation*, J.L. Soria, p. 34. Also, "Winning Recruits," p. 355: "The person about to 'whistle' [convert] is placed under tremendous emotional, moral and religious pressure, which is often accompanied by fear. 'People become frightened. They are surprised at our eagerness to bring other souls to God to serve Him' (The Founder, *Cronica iv*, 1971)". In another place the Founder writes: "This holy coercion is necessary. *Compelle intrare* the Lord tells us . . . with the obstinate there is an obligation to give this holy help . . . it is a task that we, the members of Opus Dei, have an obligation to carry out . . . at time[s] man resists the Divine calling . . . when the vocational crisis is aroused. To answer no to this calling is a radical opposition to the Will of God . . . it is not coercion but cooperation with our Lord in his desire for workers." from *Cronica viii*, 1959.

³⁹Ibid., p. 25.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 25.

With St. John, continuous fidelity. With Peter . . . many serious falls. Then there is the way of Judas, where there is a deliberate refusal to listen to what Christ is saying, and finally, betrayal and abandonment of the right road."⁴¹ Subtly, the recruiter convinces the potential recruit that a possible vocation to God can only mean a vocation to Opus Dei. The traditional ways of serving God in the Church are reportedly treated with disdain.

This intellectual bombardment is laced with the thought-stopping clichés: "parents don't understand," and, "every vocation is bound to meet with plenty of hostility." Also, "If they had paid too much attention to parental reservations, the Catholic Church might well be short a number of its outstanding saints."⁴² A favorite is, "The Pope approves." The purpose of clichés is to prevent further discussion, and to avoid answering direct questions: to "stonewall" the questioner, whether parent, recruit, or other.

CHARACTERISTIC TEN: *"keeping recruits constantly busy and never alone; continual exhortation and training in order to arrive at an exalted spiritual status, altered consciousness, automatic submission to directive; stifling resistance and negativity; response to fear in a way that greater fear is often aroused"*

A policy of "availability to the Work," which means a corresponding nonavailability to other activities, especially those of one's family, is strictly implemented to further isolate recruits. Gradually all free moments are filled, particularly those times normally reserved for fundamentally Catholic family gatherings: Christmas, Easter, birthday, weddings, siblings' First Communions. Often, even funerals and hospitalizations of family members will probably not be attended. The purpose is to

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 38.

⁴² Dwight G. Duncan, Director, U.S. Information Office of Opus Dei, New York City, in *New Oxford Review*, letter to editor, July-August 1984.

prepare the way, surreptitiously, for eventual total separation from the natural family.⁴³

Father Felzmann writes that by playing on their fears of offending God, "young members are discouraged from telling their families they have joined until the member's vocation has 'matured' (that takes years!)."⁴⁴ The fear of actually losing one's immortal soul is played upon as well: "the outcome of those Judas-type lives . . . there are plenty of people who have decided that a failure to persevere in vocation means nothing less than eternal damnation."⁴⁵ Great and immediate fear of reprisal if one falters is aroused in no uncertain terms: "If one of my children abandons the fight . . . let him know that he betrays us all, Jesus Christ, the Church, his brothers and sisters in the Work . . . It would be treason to consent to the tiniest act of unfaithfulness."⁴⁶

CHARACTERISTIC ELEVEN: *the insistence on a "strong focus on the leader; some groups may even downgrade the role of Christ in favor of the founder (in the case of some 'Christian sects')."*

While there is little evidence that Opus Dei downgrades Christ, there is ample and striking evidence of intense focus upon the Founder (now called "Our Father" within Opus Dei), and evidence of the downgrading of the rest of the Church.

Intense concentration on the Founder is the main part of the huge public relations effort of Opus Dei. Major Opus Dei publications feature "the Father" and his remarkable

⁴³Recruiting manual, *Vocation*, p. 34: "the vocation is a call to leave one's own part of the world, one's own family and country . . . God has asked for [these things], as He asked . . . for the first fruits, flawless and unblemished, as the material for the burnt-offering." Compare: "We are ordinary men and women, who in no way differ from our colleagues and acquaintances, from those who live at our side in our milieu and social setting" (Thierry, *Opus Dei—A Close-up*, p. 80).

⁴⁴Fr. V. Felzmann, formerly of Opus Dei, *Int. to Irish Times*, 11/11/82.

⁴⁵*Vocation*, p. 46.

⁴⁶The Founder, *Cronica*, vol. II, 1972.

and dedicated life. Since "the Work," complete and whole, "was inspired by God in the Founder on October 2, 1928,"⁴⁷ it therefore cannot be changed. "We are his children," Monsignor Alvaro del Portillo, the current head and Prelate, is fond of saying. "He is our Father, and we cannot criticize our Father."⁴⁸ Carrying this to an extreme, members are encouraged to abandon previous habits of prayers for intercession by many saints, and to concentrate on praying for the intercession of the founder.⁴⁹ Expensively and carefully produced "slick" magazines with excellent photographs promote the founder as the central reality of Opus Dei. His canonization is now being sought with intense vigor. The house where he was born, the Shrine of the Virgin Mary where he was "cured" in 1904, the houses in which he lived (each now marked with a plaque), even the baptismal font in which he was christened (now reconstructed and moved to Rome), have become places and objects of veneration.⁵⁰

Each year members and potential recruits migrate to Rome, ostensibly to experience the Holy City and to meet with the Pope. Without fail such trips include a visit to the Founder's tomb at central headquarters at Viale Bruno Buozzi-75. Before he died, Monsignor Escriva supervised the building of his tomb and requested that the inscription on it read, "A sinner, pray for him. He gave birth to sons and daughters."⁵¹ Only the words "El Padre" ("The Father"), however, are there. Doing the will of "the Father" is a common phrase, and a common desire in Opus Dei.

Newer members are obliged to send home all pictures of themselves with their natural

⁴⁷Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, in an interview, *The Catholic Register*, 1/26/82.

⁴⁸Msgr. del Portillo, quoted in "Secret World of Opus Dei," *New York Times*, 1/8/84, p. 40.

⁴⁹Personal experiences of members of the Ad Hoc Alliance.

⁵⁰Michael Walsh, *The Secret World of Opus Dei*, Grafton Books, 8 Grafton Street, London W1X 3LA, England, 1989, pp. 193-94.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 194.

families. Sometimes this is done by means of a clever pastiche of cutout faces pasted on a handmade Christmas card or birthday card. Pictures of Monsignor Escriva and of his mother and father, however, appear prominently in every Opus Dei house. One is told that this represents a conscious effort to emphasize that Opus Dei is a family, presided over by a father.⁵²

In virtually every talk, homily, and exhortation to the members, "the Father" refers to them as "my children," with many additional requests that they "do it for me," "do the will of the Father," etc. Small memorabilia known to be favorites of "the Father" (e.g., ducks and donkeys) are placed about in all houses to bring him to mind constantly.

Inexorably, this helps to effect the radical transfer of normal family loyalties to the "new family" of Opus Dei. No natural family can compare with this family of the sainted monsignor. Consequently the contrast, however subtle, is jarring. The forced choice between this "Holy Family" and one's own mortal clay-footed family is subliminally made easier. Moreover, if one has been convinced that it is "God's will" that is fulfilled when one joins, and that one's "true friend" and spiritual director would be made intensely happy by this "generous" choice, the option to join can be made to seem irresistible to an ingenuous mind.

⁵²*New York Times*, article "Secret World, etc." 1884 p. 40.

PART TWO

As we have seen, the Vatican report has described the contrived conversion and training methods (the social and psychological manipulation) being used by some new religious movements. It warns also that sects using these methods can be destructive to personalities and disruptive of families and society (4.2). Since, on all eleven counts, the recruiting and training actions of Opus Dei fit the descriptions accurately, we are obliged as Catholic parents to do what we can "to inform the faithful, especially the young, to put them on their guard (4.3)."

We agree wholeheartedly that "certain sectarian mentalities and attitudes, i.e. attitudes of intolerance and aggressive proselytism, do not necessarily 'constitute a sect,' nor do they suffice to characterize a sect" (1.1.2). Therefore, although Opus Dei members do show attitudes of intolerance and aggressive proselytism, we are not—repeat *not*—here characterizing Opus Dei as a sect or a cult. We leave that evaluation to competent Church authorities.

But obviously, Opus Dei is a new religious movement, and, as such, does fit the general description of a sect given by the Vatican: "a religious group with a distinctive worldview of its own derived from, but not identical with, the teachings of a world religion" (1.1.4).

Authoritarian Structure; Membership

Furthermore, Opus Dei does have the other distinctive features of a sect: it is "authoritarian in structure;" and as we have shown, it "exercises forms of mind [opinions and attitudes] control; [it] cultivates group pressure and instills feelings of guilt and fear" (1.1.4).

A totally authoritarian structure spreads in concentric circles from the Head of Opus

Dei. There are no elections in the Work, except for the one which, by appointment, picks the successor to the Head from an inner circle of priests called *inscripti* (leaders). The next larger circle outward is of *numeraries*—priests or lay celibates who devote all of their time to Opus Dei, running the business of Opus Dei, the Houses, etc. There are also *aggregati* (associates)—*numeraries* pledged totally to Opus Dei, who live and recruit outside the Houses of the Work, but who, according to Thierry (in France at least), “have no university degrees, or social class or profession.” A parallel group, the *Priestly Society of the Holy Cross*, consists of priests who, although under the local bishop, recruit for Opus through their parish connections and other work, at every opportunity.

Lifelong servants in the houses of the Work, the celibate *numerary assistants*, are women recruited as teenagers and trained in “catering” schools, mostly in the farm areas of Latin America, Spain, and Ireland where a “peasant class” is still deemed to exist. Once they are convinced they have a vocation, their education and social development ceases, and they serve but do not fraternize with the college graduate numerary members.

The next larger circle outward is for *super-numerarii*—married and unmarried folk who devote part-time efforts and whose main obligation is to pursue sanctity by Opus Dei direction and to carry out a vigorous search for potential recruits in their professional and family lives. They bring as many people as possible to the attractive “front” projects of the Work.

Although Canon Law forbids admitting anyone younger than eighteen, Opus has a way around that: the category *aspirant*. “Nothing prevents a candidate [however young] from being regarded as an aspirant for some time before [his/her] seventeenth birthday,” reads Article 2, paragraph 4 of the 1982 Statutes. From the Opus point of view, expressing a desire to join thereby can make juveniles as young as twelve secret members of the Work, with no notification necessary to the competent authorities, their parents. Also, semi-

narians may be regarded and admitted as aspirants to the *Priestly Society of the Holy Cross*, even before they become deacons.

Finally, in the outermost circle, are the *cooperators*: friends, sympathizers, fellow workers, and even those who are unaware that merely by attending days of recollection they will be considered as such. These least knowledgeable members are mainly attracted to the orthodox Catholic spirituality, and know little of Opus Dei practices as such.

Ordinarily these levels of membership are not interchangeable, and information is given to each level on a "need to know" basis only. For example, supernumeraries are usually shocked to hear of the common numerary practices of flagellation, total salary turnover, and the widespread practice of advising youth (even those underage) not to tell their parents when joining.

Patterned Response of Spokesmen

As noted in the Introduction, Opus Dei spokesmen have developed a set of thought-stopping cliches in responding verbally to parents and others seeking information. For written (published) criticism that requires longer and more detailed responses, a pattern of reply has emerged as well. Some or all of the following elements are characteristic of Opus Dei responses to published criticism:

- a denial of all charges, with the implication that all charges are unfair, coming as they must from "uninformed" sources;
- a complaint that the editor unfairly did not submit these charges first to Opus Dei before publication;
- an attack on the credentials and personal integrity of the critic;
- an implication that the publisher is at fault, having lowered publication standards to publish such terrible, anti-Catholic charges;
- when pressed about Opus Dei specifics, the response is to repeat Church policy and/or doctrine, as if the Church were really under attack, and not Opus Dei.

(Example: possible question: "The Founder says in Maxim 399 of *The Way* that members are allowed to use holy coercion in recruiting. Is that Opus Dei policy?" Archetypical answer: "Canon Law of the Catholic Church forbids any coercion, from family or any others in regard to religious vocations.")

The final response listed here, that of pulling the mantle of the Church over the organization in order to conceal Opus Dei policy, has thus far been effective with both secular and Catholic interviewers. In addition, much has been made by spokesmen of the organization's "approval by the Church" to stymie legitimate inquiry.

Parents in the AHA have already experienced that "there is generally little or no possibility of dialogue" with Opus Dei concerning recruiting methods, or concerning its Constitutions or governing Statutes. We believe deeply that Catholic youth must have their genuine vocations to God protected from abuse. Church policy (that is, full capacity, fully informed consent) must be the norm in every case. We are thankful for the Pastoral Report, which clearly reminds all Catholics that the use of *any* manipulative conversion or training method for Catholic "vocations" is reprehensible.

Attraction of New Sects

It is important for families to realize how attractive new religious movements like Opus Dei can be. "[O]ne can say that the sects seem to live by what they believe," the Report stipulates (2.1.10), "with powerful (often magnetic) conviction, devotion and commitment; going out of their way to meet people where they are, warmly, personally, and directly, promoting participation, spontaneity, responsibility, commitment. In one word," the Report continues, "they present themselves as the only answer, *the* 'good news' in a chaotic world" (2.1.10).

The description fits Opus Dei accurately. More specific attractive externals include:

Apparent loyalty to the magisterium and the Pope, orthodox doctrine, reverential liturgy, daily Communion, weekly confession, and closely directed prayer and penance. Within this Catholic context, there is the promise to bring one's life into focus with God day by day, moment by moment.

For some, a major attraction is the suggestion that one does not have to sell all one has and give to the poor: One can legitimately concern oneself with the trappings of wealth and at the same time achieve personal sanctity by proselytising others. In this blessed marriage of Caesar (prestige, power, corporate pride) to asceticism, one can follow the Crucified Lord Who had no place to lay His Head, and still inhabit the palace. Indeed, in Maxim 979¹ of *The Way*, the recommended "apostolate of not giving" would seem to eliminate pro bono work to outsiders altogether. Selfless and generous professional service to those in need is firmly discouraged. In today's materialistic world, this is an especially appealing message.

Early Signs of Manipulation

The Vatican's message should also be clear. Parents, and all family members, must be vigilant about their family's spiritual welfare. They must look beyond the surface presentation of any group, and be aware of the early signs of manipulation:

- evasive and shifting answers to direct questions;
- a humorlessness about the group, and a (slight) derision or condescension about other Catholic groups;
- a consistent disinclination to discuss criticism openly;

¹ Maxim 979: "It is human nature to have little appreciation for what costs but little. That is why I recommended to you the 'apostolate of not giving.'"

Never fail to claim what is fairly and justly due to you from the practice of your profession, even if your profession is the instrument of your apostolate."

- the gnostic hint that only this group can save the corrupted Church;
- the unthinking, personal attack on any critic as being bad, malicious, or "of the Devil" (the sign of a cult mentality);
- clubs, programs, and other activities that arbitrarily separate wives from husbands, children from parents, and siblings from each other;
- religious training for children that dwells on their guilt.

The "Pope Approves" Cliche

Never be satisfied with the thought-stopping cliché "the Pope approves" if it is the response given in place of an answer to a critical inquiry. The Pope also "approves" of charismatics, the Jesuits, the Franciscans, and a huge variety of groups whose intentions and ideals are stated to be Catholic. That does not shut out the need for critical inquiry about them.

In the words of Father Felzmann, "Opus Dei does a great deal of good to those 'outside.' But at what cost to truth, life, self? Once again life proves that anything less than naked honesty has the taint of corruption somewhere in the shadows" (letter to the *Irish Times*, 11/11/82).

Not Genuinely Catholic Practice

It may be claimed that Opus Dei training might benefit some persons, because it is, after all, grounded in Catholicism. But the most effective training imaginable, if it is achieved by deceitful means, is abhorrent to Catholic thought and praxis. Even heaven as an end may not be achieved by immoral or tainted means.

Futhermore, it is fundamental that conniving to breach the Fourth Commandment by subtly usurping parental roles and rights is deeply wrong. Teaching young people to bear false witness to their parents and family, in violation of the Eighth Commandment, misusing biblical quotations, and presenting a false image of the Church, are all deeply

wrong. Our Lord gave specific warning to the Pharisees:

Moses said "Honor thy father and mother," but you say "let a man say to his father or his mother, 'Any support you might have had from me is Corban' (that is, given to God)." You make void the Commandment of God by your tradition, which you have handed down. (Mark 7:11,13)

And again, in Matthew 23:15–22, Our Lord chastises them about their aggressive and self-serving recruitment:

Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you traverse sea and land to make one proselyte [convert]; and when he has become one you make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves.

Early Desires to Serve God

We repeat the important papal direction regarding the early disposition of children to serve God. John Paul II has clearly stated the Church's unchanged perception of the finding of the boy Jesus in the temple: "Here is Jesus, who returns to Nazareth and is obedient to them, to Mary and Joseph. That obedience signifies filial obedience, but also at the same time, an obedient opening to humanity, which always needs to learn, above all in the family."² The spiritual formation of children is a parent's duty and right. Others perform it in loco parentis, and only with parental permission.

When Opus Dei priests advise underage youth not to tell their parents of their decision to join Opus Dei, the false assumption they perpetuate is that children are somehow autonomous, and the legitimate targets ("fair game") for adult proselytisers. Not to let their parents object (know) violates the parents' God-given duty-rights. It breaches the Fourth Commandment, and, by teaching children to

²*Osservatore Romano* 766, 12/26/82.

give a false witness to legitimate authority, violates the Eighth Commandment.

Deliberately Confusing Parental Notification and Approval

Of special note here should be the blurring of the difference between the notification of parents, and their parental approval. Parents **MUST** be notified, for without knowledge no parent can make the choices required in shouldering the profound responsibilities of child-raising. Whether or not parents **APPROVE** of their children's choices is an entirely separate matter.

There are many groups who deliberately confuse these two issues, the better to perform "parentectomy" — Dr. Robert Mendelsohn's word for the calculated separation of children from their families. These include the so-called "sex-educators," Planned Parenthood, many social agencies, every aggressive religious cult, and, unfortunately as shown, Opus Dei.

Distorting Holy Scripture to Deceive

By using selected biblical texts out of the context of the whole Christian message, the unscrupulous can both confuse and disorient. Two examples: Mark 13:12,13, which says, "Brother will be given up to death by brother, and the son by his father; children will rise up against their parents . . . because you bear My name"; and Luke 14:26, which says similarly, "If any man comes to Me, without hating his father and mother . . . and his own life too, he can be no disciple of mine" (both examples used in the Opus Dei recruiting manual *Vocation*, by J.L. Soria, Head, Opus Dei Canada).

The Catholic Tradition

Like most of revealed truth, these are mysterious sayings, difficult to comprehend fully within context, impossible out of context. Catholic tradition holds to some basic principles in attempting to understand what Our

Lord meant. First, no interpretation of scriptural passages can be allowed that seems to pit Christ against His Father's commandments or His own teachings. Nor should these isolated texts be interpreted or used to divide Christians among themselves, for they are clearly commanded to love one another.

The Fathers of the Church

Second, we learn from the Church Fathers. St. Augustine sums up the Church's twofold message to the world: "The fulfillment and end of Scripture is the love of God and our neighbor." He added: "Whoever, then, thinks that he understands the Holy Scriptures, or any part of them, but puts such an interpretation upon them as does not tend to build up this two-fold love of God and our neighbor, does not yet understand them as he ought" (*On Christian Doctrine*, chapter 36).

And where must we look first, to learn how best to love our neighbor? To our parents. Once again, the Church Fathers: St. Thomas teaches that the order of the Ten Commandments can be explained by the due order of those persons to whom humans are indebted. The first three Commandments regard man's relating to God. "Consequently, among the precepts that direct man in his relations to his neighbor the first place is given to that one which regards his parents" (*Summa*, Part I, 2nd Part, Q.100, art.6).

Whatever interpretation is given to isolated texts must (to repeat Augustine) "build up this two-fold love of God and our neighbor," with our parents as the primary example of "neighbor."

Teachings of the Magisterium

Catholic parents should be reminded of the Church's continuing and unchanged emphasis on the inviolability of the family unit. For example, Pope Leo XIII, in his epistle *Humanum Genus*, written to expose the dangers of secret societies, especially the Freemasons, advised all Catholics:

Those who instruct the young in religious knowledge will act wisely if they induce all of them to resolve never to bind themselves to any society without the knowledge of their parents. (H-G 36:14-18)

While Opus Dei spokesmen insist that parents do know what kind of training their children are receiving when they attend Houses of Opus Dei,³ the testimony of a disturbing number of parents is exactly the opposite. Certainly, being denied knowledge of Opus Dei's hidden agenda, parents cannot fulfill their obligation to educate their children. Pius XII's encyclical *Function of the State in the Modern World* contains the following passage regarding parents' rights of conscience:

The charge laid by God on parents to provide for the material and spiritual good of their offspring . . . cannot be wrested from them without grave violation of their rights. (FSMW "Rights of Conscience")

The signal importance of parents as primary spiritual educators of their children is well documented by Vatican II:

of such importance that it is impossible to provide an adequate substitute (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 3)

is merely one of many superb statements.

The Obligation to "Educate"

John Paul II has clarified what the Church means by the obligation of parents "to educate" their children:

The formation in their children of a mature personality, fruit of the patrimony and fundamental values in relation to life, is one

³"Obviously parents are aware when their sons or daughters are frequenting centers of Opus Dei, and of the nature of the spiritually formative activities that take place there" (Dwight G. Duncan, Director, U.S. Information Office at Opus Dei, New York City, letter to editor, *New Oxford Review*, 7/84).

of [the parents'] specific responsibilities.
(Address to Pontifical Institute, *Utriusque
Iuris*, 4/26/86)

Our Holy Father has been constantly reassuring parents on this point, in over a decade of teachings on the family, especially in his letter *Familiaris Consortio*:

The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected to the transmission of life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others . . . [and] irreplaceable, and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others. (*Fam. Consort* 36.2)

Importance of the Family

Vigilant parents find constant support and reinforcement in the teachings of the present Pope. He clearly states the Church's growing perception of the centrality of the "Domestic Church," the family unit:

As at Nazareth, so in every family, God becomes present and takes His place in human events. The family is, therefore, the privileged place and sanctuary. That is why the family is irreplaceable, and as such, must be defended with might and main. Everything must be done in order that the family will not be replaced.

We must do everything that can serve to protect the family and the dignity of responsible fatherhood and motherhood, and mutual trust between the generations!

The family was the hiding place of the Son of God on earth. In it, he lived his hidden life. But in it, he hid the treasures of life and sanctity.

Again and again the Holy Father teaches us:

It is sad to think that certain ideologies want to destroy the family, spreading alienation and causing disputes! It is distressing to think that so many young people

leave their own homes, casting their parents into bitterness and despair! That is not the way, that is not the way.⁴

Many Catholic families are now convinced by experience that it has, indeed, been "The Way" of Monsignor Escriva, writ large by the recruiting and training policies of Opus Dei, which has alienated their children from them by manipulative hidden means.

The coercion of religious vocations, however piously refined and penitentially disciplined, violates sacred Scripture, sacred tradition, and the teachings of the magisterium. It must cease. The only acceptable method of "recruiting" is that of Our Lord Jesus. He openly invited all, and then watched as the invitation was sometimes refused. But He never hid the message, He never coerced, He never deceived, He never manipulated.

Harmonious Affection For One's "First Friends"

Finally, John Paul II teaches us, in an address to (college) students from Rome and Latium:

there is a third thing, which has great value at your age: attachment to your family, especially your parents. Establish and always maintain a relationship of great and true affection with your parents; they are your first friends. To a large extent, your life in the future depends on how you are today in harmony with and cherish respect for those who begot you and brought you up. Certainly, the moment of detachment may come, and for this, too, you must train for personally responsible growth; but never cut your human and family roots, on pain of becoming arid or wild.⁵

The Ad Hoc Alliance to Defend the Fourth Commandment joins Our Holy Father, John Paul II, in his daily prayer for each Domestic Church. May Our Lady and St. Joseph in search of the Lost Child guide us constantly.

⁴*Osservatore Romano*, 3/1/79, 5/4/81, 10/12/80, 9/22/80.

⁵*Osservatore Romano* 624, 3/17/80.

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The unpublished material referred to in this publication—mainly the editorials of *Cronica*—is available for inspection by written application accompanied by a reference to: Dr. John Roche, Linacre College, Oxford University, Oxford OX1 3JA, England.

APPENDIX I

OUR LADY AND ST. JOSEPH IN SEARCH OF THE LOST CHILD

An Ad Hoc Alliance to Defend the Fourth
Commandment
305 Madison Avenue, suite 1146
New York City 10165

Our Lady and St. Joseph in Search of the Lost Child, an Ad Hoc Alliance to Defend the Fourth Commandment, is a Catholic response to what is essentially a Catholic problem. Within the Church a sect calling itself Opus Dei (Work Of God) has risen to some prominence and influence. In its wake it has left Catholic families (and others) hurt and tempted to bitterness by its recruiting and training methods.

We are a support group to those families, reaching out to them in their confusion and sorrow. Since we have all suffered in like manner, we seek to comfort with prayer, information, and shared experiences. Together we look forward to the day when our voices will be heard by Holy Mother Church.

To make reparations for the excesses of Opus Dei recruiters—some of whom are now our own children—we pray, fast and practice Eucharistic almsgiving. We encourage all Catholics to pray en famille, especially on the Feast of the Holy Family, our day of recollection, for all persons alienated from their families by the policies of Opus Dei. We join the Pope in his constant prayer for every Domestic Church.

Recitation of, and meditation on the Holy Rosary within the family and before the Blessed Sacrament is urged as well; at the Fifth Joyful Mystery (Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple) we pray for the virtue of

obedience as interpreted for the Church by
His Holiness John Paul II:

Here is Jesus, who returns to Nazareth and is obedient to them, to Mary and Joseph. That obedience signifies filial obedience, but also at the same time an obedient opening to humanity, which always needs to learn, above all in the family." (*Osservatore Romano* 766,26/12/82)

We pray also for the cessation of the misinterpretation of this Mystery by Opus Dei directors.

Humbly and urgently we ask our Holy Father John Paul II:

1. that all Opus Dei sponsored, managed, and staffed activities be clearly labelled as such;
2. that the Opus Dei Constitutions and Statutes be published immediately and be made available in vernacular languages to all concerned persons, so that consent to this organization be truly informed consent;
3. that those recruiting procedures and policies of Opus Dei which have for many years anguished parents and alienated young people from their natural families be halted immediately and thoroughly restructured;
4. that the sectarian mentality which permeates Opus Dei, often causing members to distort the truth, or to withhold it entirely from legitimate authorities, be identified and abolished immediately, to be replaced by truly Catholic openness to humanity.

APPENDIX II

Per rispondere

Challenge of New Religious Movements (Sects or Cults)

Joint progress report of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, the Secretariat for Non-Christians, the Secretariat for Non-Believers and the Pontifical Council for Culture, based on replies and documentation received by October 1985 from regional and national episcopal conferences.

(May 7, 1986)

INTRODUCTION

Definition

1.1 *What are "sects"? What does one mean by "cults"?* It is important to realize that there exist difficulties in concepts, definitions, and terminology. The terms "sect" and "cult" are somewhat derogatory and seem to imply a rather negative value judgment. One might prefer more neutral terms such as "new religious movements," "new religious groups." The question of the definition of those "new movements" or "groups" as distinct from "church" or "legitimate movements within a church" is a contentious matter.

It will help to distinguish sects that find their origin in the Christian religion, from those which come from another religious or humanitarian source. The matter becomes quite delicate when these groups are of Christian origin. Nevertheless, it is important to make *this distinction*. Indeed, certain sectar-

ian mentalities and attitudes, i.e. attitudes, of intolerance and aggressive proselytism, do not necessarily "constitute a sect," nor do they suffice to characterize a sect. One also finds these attitudes in groups of Christian believers within the Churches and ecclesial communities. However, these groups can change positively through a deepening of their Christian formation and through contact with other fellow Christians. In this way they can grow into an increasingly ecclesial mind and attitude.

The criterion for distinguishing between *sects* of Christian origin, on the one hand, and *Churches and ecclesial communities*, on the other hand, might be found in the "sources" of the teaching of these groups. For instance, sects could be those groups which, apart from the Bible, have other "revealed" books or "prophetic messages"; or groups which exclude from the Bible certain protocanonical books, or radically change their content. In answer to question 1 of the questionnaire, one of the replies states:

For practical reasons a cult or sect is sometimes defined as 'any religious group with a distinctive world-view of its own derived from, but not identical with, the teachings of a major world religion.' As we are speaking here of special groups which usually pose a threat to people's freedom and to society in general, cults and sects have also been characterized as possessing a number of distinctive features. These often are that they are authoritarian in structure, that they exercise forms of brain-washing and mind control, that they cultivate group pressure and instill feelings of guilt and fear, etc. The basic work on these characteristic marks was published by an American, Dave Breese, *Know the Marks of Cults* (Victor Books, Wheaton, Ill., 1985).

Whatever the difficulties with regard to distinguishing between sects of Christian origin and churches, ecclesial communities or Christian movements, the responses to the questionnaire reveal at times a serious

lack of understanding and knowledge of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities. Some include among "sects" churches and ecclesial communities which are not in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Also adherents of major world religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.) may find themselves classified as belonging to a sect.

Seriousness

1.2 However, and apart from the difficulties mentioned, almost all the local Churches do see the *emergence* and rapid *proliferation* of all kinds of "new" religious or pseudo-religious movements, groups and practices. The phenomenon is considered by almost all the respondents as a *serious matter*, by some as an alarming matter; in only a very few countries there does not seem to exist any problem (e.g., in predominantly Islamic countries).

In some cases the phenomenon appears within the mainline churches themselves (*sectarian attitudes*). In other cases it occurs outside the churches (independent or free churches; messianic or prophetic movements), or against the churches (sects, cults) often establishing for themselves church-like patterns. However, not all are religious in their real content or ultimate purpose.

Pastoral Problems

1.3 The phenomenon develops fast, and often quite successfully, and poses *pastoral problems*. The most immediate pastoral problem is that of knowing how to deal with a member of a Catholic family who has become involved in a sect. The parish priest or local pastoral workers or adviser usually has to deal first and foremost with the relatives and friends of such a person. Often the person involved can be approached only indirectly. In those cases when the person can be approached directly in order to give him or her guidance, or to advise an ex-member on how to re-integrate into society and the Church, psychological skill and expertise is required.

The Groups that are Most Affected

1.4 The most *vulnerable* groups in the Church, especially the youth, seem to be the most affected. When they are "footloose," unemployed, not active in parish life or voluntary parish work, or come from an unstable family background or belong to ethnic minority groups, or live in places which are rather far from the Church's reach, etc. . . . , they are a more likely target for the new movements and sects. Some sects seem to attract mainly people in the middle-age group. Others thrive on membership from well-to-do and highly educated families. In this context, mention must be made of university campuses, which are often favorable breeding grounds or places of recruitment for sects. Moreover, difficult relations with the clergy or an irregular marriage situation can lead one to break with the Church and join a new group.

Very few people seem to join a sect for evil reasons. Perhaps the greatest opportunity of the sects is to attract good people and good motivation in those people. In fact, they usually succeed best when society or Church have failed to touch this good motivation.

Recruitment of Catholics

1.5 *The reasons for the success* among Catholics are indeed manifold and can be identified on several levels. They are primarily related to the needs and aspirations which are seemingly not being met in the mainline Churches. They are also related to the recruitment and training techniques of the sects. They can be external either to the mainline Churches or to the new groups: economic advantages, political interest or pressure, mere curiosity, etc.

An assessment of these reasons can be adequately done only from *within the very particular context* in which they emerge. However, the results of a general assessment (and this is what this report is about) can, and in this case do, reveal a whole range of "particular" reasons which as a matter of fact turn out to be almost universal. A growing

interdependence in today's world might provide us with an explanation for this.

The phenomenon seems to be symptomatic of the *depersonalizing structures* of contemporary society, largely produced in the West and widely exported to the rest of the world, which create multiple crisis situations on the individual as well as on the social level. These crisis situations reveal various needs, aspirations and questions which, in turn, call for psychological and spiritual responses. The sects claim to have, and to give, these responses. They do this on both the affective and the cognitive level, often responding to the affective needs in a way that deadens the cognitive faculties.

These basic needs and aspirations can be described as so many expressions of the human search for wholeness and harmony, participation and realization, on all the levels of human existence and experience; so many attempts to meet the human quest for truth and meaning, for those constitutive values which at certain times in collective as well as individual history seem to be hidden, broken, or lost, especially in the case of people who are upset by rapid change, acute stress, fear, etc.

Pastoral Challenge

1.6 The responses to the questionnaire show that the phenomenon is to be seen not so much as a threat to the Church (although many respondents do consider the aggressive proselytism of some sects a major problem), but rather as a pastoral challenge. Some respondents emphasize that, while at all times preserving our own integrity and honesty, we should remember that each religious group has the right to profess its own faith and to live according to its own conscience. They stress that in dealing with individual groups we have the duty to proceed according to the principles of religious dialogue which have been laid down by the Second Vatican Council and in later Church documents. Moreover, it is imperative to remember the respect due to each individual, and that

our *attitude* to sincere believers should be one of openness and understanding, not of condemnation.

The responses to the questionnaire show a great need for information, education of believers, and a renewed pastoral approach.

2. REASON FOR THE SPREAD OF THOSE MOVEMENTS AND GROUPS

Crisis situations or general vulnerability can reveal and/or produce needs and aspirations which become basic motivations for turning to the sects. They appear on the cognitive as well as on the affective level, and are *relational* in character, i.e., centered upon "self" in relation with "others" (social), with the past, present and future (cultural, existential), with the transcendent (religious). These levels and dimensions are *interrelated*. These needs and aspirations can be grouped under nine major headings, although in individual cases, they often overlap. For each group of "aspirations" we indicate what the sects are seen to offer. The main reasons for their success can be seen from that point of view, but one must also take into account the recruitment practices and indoctrinational techniques of many sects (cf. below, 2.2).

Needs and Aspirations; What the Sects Appear to Offer

2.1.1 *The quest for belonging (sense of community)*

The fabric of many communities has been destroyed; traditional lifestyles have been disrupted; homes are broken up; people feel uprooted and lonely. Thus the need to belong.

Terms used in the responses: belonging, love, community, communication, warmth, concern, care, support, friendship, affection, fraternity, help, solidarity, encounter, dialogue, consolation, acceptance, understanding, sharing, closeness, mutuality, togetherness, fellowship, reconciliation, tolerance, roots, security, refuge, protection, safety, shelter, home.

The sects appear to offer: human warmth, care and support in small and close-knit com-

munities; sharing of purpose and fellowship; attention for the individual; protection and security, especially in crisis situations; re-socialization of marginalized individuals (for instance, the divorced or immigrants); the sect often does the thinking for the individual.

2.1.2 *The search for answers*

In complex and confused situations, people naturally search for answers and solutions.

The sects appear to offer: simple and ready-made answers to complicated questions and situations; simplified and partial versions of traditional truths and values; a pragmatic theology, a theology of success; a syncretistic theology proposed as “new revelation”; “new truths,” to people who often have little of the “old” truth; clearcut directives; a claim to moral superiority; proofs from “supernatural” elements: glossolalia, trance, mediumship, prophecies, possession, etc.

2.1.3 *The search for wholeness (holism)*

Many people feel that they are out of touch with themselves, with others, with their culture and environment. They experience brokenness. They have been hurt by parents or teachers, by the Church or society. They feel left out. They want a religious view that can harmonize everything and everybody; worship which leaves room for body and soul, for participation, spontaneity, creativity. They want healing, including bodily healing (African respondents particularly insist on this point).

Terms used in this response: healing, wholeness, integration, integrity, harmony, peace, reconciliation, spontaneity, creativity, participation.

The sects appear to offer: a gratifying religious experience, being saved, conversion; room for feelings and emotions, for spontaneity (e.g. in religious celebrations); bodily and spiritual healing; help with drug or drink problems; relevance to the life situation.

2.1.4 *The search for cultural identity*

This aspect is very closely linked with the previous one. In many Third World countries, society finds itself greatly dissociated from the traditional cultural, social and religious values; and traditional believers share this feeling.

The main terms used in the responses are: inculturation incarnation, alienation, modernization.

The sects appear to offer: plenty of room for traditional cultural/religious heritage, creativity, spontaneity, participation, a style of prayer and preaching closer to the cultural traits and aspirations of the people.

2.1.5. *The need to be recognized, to be special*

People feel a need to rise out of anonymity, to build an identity, to feel that they are in some way special and not just a number or a faceless member of a crowd. Large parishes and congregations, administration-oriented concern and clericalism, leave little room for approaching every person individually and in the person's life situation.

Terms used in responses: self-esteem, affirmation, chances, relevance, participation.

The sects appear to offer: concern for the individual; equal opportunities for ministry and leadership, for participation, for witnessing, for expression; awakening to one's own potential, the chance to be part of an elite group.

2.1.6. *The search for transcendence*

This expresses a deeply spiritual need, a God-inspired motivation to seek something beyond the obvious, the immediate, the familiar, the controllable, and the material, to find an answer to the ultimate questions of life, and to believe in something which can change one's life in a significant way. It reveals a sense of mystery, of the mysterious; a concern about what-is-to-come; an interest in messianism and prophecy. Often the people concerned are either not aware of what the Church can offer or are put off by what they consider to be a one-sided em-

phasis on morality or by the institutional aspects of the Church. One respondent speaks of "privatized seekers":

Research suggests that a surprisingly large proportion of the population will, if questioned, admit to having had some kind of religious or spiritual experience, say that this has changed their lives in some significant way, and most pertinently add that they have never told anyone about the experience. . . . Many young people say that they have been afraid of being laughed at or thought peculiar were they to broach the subject of spiritual or religious experience and that they have frequently known difficulty in getting teachers or clergy to discuss, let alone answer, their most important and ultimate questions.

Terms used in the responses: transcendence, sacred, mystery, mystical, meditation, celebration, worship, truth, faith, spirituality, meaning, goals, values, symbols, prayer, freedom, awakening, conviction.

The sects appear to offer: the Bible and Bible education; a sense of salvation; gifts of the Spirit; meditation; spiritual achievement. Some groups offer, not only permission to express and explore ultimate questions in a "safe" social context, but also a language and concepts with which to do so, as well as the presentation of a clear, relatively unambiguous set of answers.

2.1.7 *The need of spiritual guidance*

There may be a lack of parental support in the seeker's family, or lack of leadership, patience and personal commitment on the part of church leaders or educators.

Terms used: guidance, devotion, commitment, affirmation, leadership, guru.

The sects appear to offer: guidance and orientation through strong, charismatic leadership. The person of the master, leader, guru, plays an important role in binding the disciples. At times, there is not only submission, but emotional surrender, an even an almost hysterical devotion to a strong spiritual leader (messiah, prophet, guru).

2.1.8 *The need of vision*

The world of today is an interdependent world of hostility and conflict, violence and fear of destruction. People feel worried about the future; often despairing, helpless, hopeless, and powerless. They look for signs of hope, for a way out. Some have a desire, however vague, to make the world better.

Terms used: vision, awakening, commitment, newness, a new order, a way out, alternatives, goals, hope.

The sects appear to offer: a "new vision" of oneself, of humanity, of history, of the cosmos. They promise the beginning of a new age, a new era.

2.1.9 *The need of participation and involvement*

This aspect is closely linked with the previous one. Many seekers not only feel the need of a vision in the present world-society and toward the future, they also want to participate in decision-making, in planning, in realizing.

The main terms used are: participation, active witness, building, elite, social involvement.

The sects appear to offer: a concrete mission for a better world, a call for total dedication, participation on most levels.

By way of summary one can say that the sects seem to live by what they believe, with powerful (often magnetic) conviction, devotion and commitment; going out of their way to meet people where they are, warmly, personally, and directly pulling the individual out of anonymity, promoting participation, spontaneity, responsibility, commitment . . . and practicing an intensive follow-up through multiple contacts, home visits, and continuing support and guidance. They help to re-interpret one's experience, to reassess one's values, and to approach ultimate issues in an all-embracing system. They usually make convincing use of the word: preaching, literature, mass media (for Christian groups strong emphasis on the Bible); and often also of the ministry of healing. In one word, they present themselves as the only answer, *the* "good news" in a chaotic world.

However, although all this mostly accounts for the success of the sects, other reasons also exist, such as the recruitment and training techniques and indoctrination procedures used by certain sects.

Recruitment and Training Techniques, Indoctrination Procedures

2.2 Some recruitment, training techniques, and indoctrination procedures, practiced by a number of sects and cults, which often are highly sophisticated, partly account for their success. Those most often attracted by such measures are those who, firstly, do not know that the approach is often staged, and, secondly, who are unaware of the nature of the contrived conversion and training methods (the social and psychological manipulation) to which they are subjected. The sects often impose their own norms of thinking, feeling, and behaving. This is in contrast to the Church's approach, which implies full-capacity informed consent.

Young and elderly alike who are at loose ends are easy prey to those techniques and methods, which are often a combination of *affection* and *deception* (cf. the "love-bombing," the "personality test," or the "surrender"). These techniques proceed from a positive approach but gradually achieve a type of mind control through the use of abusive behavior modification techniques.

The following elements are to be listed:

- subtle process of introduction of the convert and his gradual discovery of the real hosts;
- overpowering techniques: "love-bombing," offering "a free meal at an international center for friends," "flirting fishing" technique (prostitution as a method of recruitment);
- ready-made answers and decisions being almost forced upon the recruits;
- flattery;
- distribution of money, medicine;
- requirement of unconditional surrender to the initiator, leader;
- isolation: control of the rational thinking process, elimination of outside information and influence (family, friends, newspapers,

magazines, television, radio, medical treatment, etc.) which might break the spell of involvement and the process of absorption of feelings and attitudes and patterns of behavior;

- processing recruits away from their past lives; focusing on past deviant behavior such as drug use, sexual misdeeds; playing upon psychological hang-ups, poor social relationships, etc.;
- consciousness-altering methods leading to cognitive disturbances (intellectual bombardment); use of thought-stopping clichés, closed system of logic; restriction of reflective thinking.
- keeping the recruits constantly busy and never alone; continual exhortation and training in order to arrive at an exalted spiritual status, altered consciousness, automatic submission to directives; stifling resistance and negativity; response to fear in a way that greater fear is often aroused;
- strong focus on the leader; some groups may even downgrade the role of Christ in favor of the founder (in the case of some "Christian sects").

Pastoral Challenges and Approaches

A breakdown of traditional social structures, cultural patterns, and traditional sets of values, caused by industrialization, urbanization, migration, rapid development of communication systems, all-rational technocratic systems, etc., leave many individuals confused, up-rooted, insecure, and therefore vulnerable. In these situations there is naturally a search for a solution, and often the simpler the better. There is also the temptation to accept the solution as the only and final answer.

From an analysis of the responses, some symptoms of the pathology of many societies today can be listed. Many people suffer from them. They feel anxious about themselves (identity crisis), the future (unemployment, the threat of nuclear war). Questions about the nature of truth and how it is to be found,

political uncertainty and helplessness, economic and ideological domination, the meaning of life, oneself and others, events, situations, things, the "hereafter."

They suffer a loss of direction, lack of orientation, lack of participation in decision-making, lack of real answers to *their* real questions. They experience fear because of various forms of violence, conflict, hostility; fear of ecological disaster, war and nuclear holocaust; social conflicts, manipulation.

They feel frustrated, rootless, homeless, unprotected, hopeless and helpless and consequently unmotivated; lonely at home, in school, at work, on the campus, in the city; lost in anonymity, isolation, marginalization, alienation, i.e., feeling that they do not belong, that they are misunderstood, betrayed, oppressed, deceived, estranged, irrelevant, not listened to, unaccepted, not taken seriously.

They are disillusioned with technological society, the military, big business, labor, exploitation, educational systems, Church laws and practices, government policies.

They might have learned to want to see themselves as conscientious "doers," not worthless drifters or self-seeking opportunists, but often do not know what to do or how to do it.

They are at a loss at various "in-between" times (between school and university, between school and work, between marriage and divorce, between village and city).

They become empty, indifferent, or aggressive, or they may become "seekers."

In summary one could say that all these symptoms represent so many forms of alienation (from oneself, from others, from one's roots, culture etc.). One could say that the needs and aspirations expressed in the responses to the questionnaire are so many forms of a search for "presence" (to oneself, to others, to God). Those who feel lost want to be found. In other words, there is a vacuum crying out to be filled, which is indeed the context in which we can understand not only the criticisms toward the Church which many responses contain, but foremost the

pastoral concerns and proposed approaches. The replies to the questionnaire point out many deficiencies and inadequacies in the actual behavior of the Church which can facilitate the success of the sects. However, without further insisting on them, we will mainly emphasize the positive pastoral approaches which are suggested or called for. If these are acted upon, the challenge of the sects may prove to have been a useful stimulus for spiritual and ecclesial renewal.

Sense of community

3.1 Almost all the responses appeal for a rethinking (at least in many local situations) of the traditional "parish community system"; a search for community patterns which will be more fraternal, more "to the measure of man," more adapted to people's life situation; more "basic ecclesial communities": caring communities of lively faith, love (warmth, acceptance, understanding, reconciliation, fellowship), and hope; celebrating communities; praying communities; missionary communities; outgoing and witnessing; communities open to and supporting people who have special problems: the divorced and "re-married," the marginalized.

Formation and ongoing formation

The responses put strong emphasis on the need for evangelization, catechesis, education and ongoing education in the faith — biblical, theological, ecumenical — of the faithful, at the level of the local communities, and of the clergy and those involved in formation. (One reply advocates "reflective courses for teachers, youth leaders, clergy and religious.") This ongoing process should be both *informative*, with information about our own Catholic tradition (beliefs, practices, spirituality, meditation, contemplation, etc.), about other traditions and about the new religious groups, etc., and *formative*, with guidance in personal and communal faith, a deeper sense of the Transcendant, of the eschatological, or religious commitment, of community spirit, etc. The Church should not only be a sign of hope for people, but

should also give them the reasons for that hope; it should help to ask questions, as well as to answer them. In this process there is an overall emphasis on the centrality of Holy Scripture. Greater and better use should be made of the mass media of communication.

Personal and holistic approach

3.3 People must be helped to know themselves as unique, loved by a personal God and with a personal history from birth through death to resurrection. "Old truth" should continually become for them "new truth" through a genuine sense of renewal, but with criteria and a framework of thinking that will not be shaken by every "newness" that comes their way. Special attention should be paid to the experiential dimension, i.e. discovering Christ personally through prayer and dedication (e.g. the charismatic and "born again" movements). Many Christians live as if they had never been born at all! Special attention must be given to the healing ministry through prayers, reconciliation, fellowship and care. Our pastoral concern should not be one-dimensional, it should extend, not only to the spiritual, but also to the physical, psychological, social, cultural, economic and political dimensions.

Cultural Identity

3.4 The question of inculturation is a fundamental one. It is particularly stressed by the responses from Africa which reveal a feeling of estrangement to Western forms of worship and ministry which are often quite irrelevant to people's cultural environment and life situation. One respondent declared:

Africans want to be Christians. We have given them accommodation, but no home. ... They want a simpler Christianity, integrated into all aspects of daily life, into the sufferings, joys, works, aspirations, fears and needs of the African. ... The young recognize in the Independent Churches a genuine vein of the African tradition of doing things religious.

Prayer and Worship

3.5 Some suggest a rethinking of the classic Saturday evening/Sunday morning liturgical pattern, which often remain foreign to the daily life situation. The word of God should be rediscovered as an important community-building element. "Reception" should receive as much attention as "conservation." There should be room for joyful creativity, a belief in Christian inspiration and capacity of "invention," and a greater sense of communal celebration. Here again, inculturation is a must (with due respect for the nature of the liturgy and for the demands of universality).

Many respondents insist on the biblical dimension of *preaching* on the need to speak the people's languages; the need for careful preparation of preaching and liturgy (as far as possible done by a team, including lay participation). Preaching is not merely theorizing, intellectualizing and moralizing but presupposes the witness of the preacher's life. Preaching, worship and community prayer should not necessarily be confined to traditional places of worship.

Participation and Leadership

3.6 Most respondents are aware of the growing shortage of ordained ministers and of religious men and women. This calls for stronger promotion of diversified ministry and the ongoing formation of lay leadership. More attention should perhaps be given to the role that can be played in an approach to the sects—or, at least, to those attracted by the sects—by lay people who, within the Church and in collaboration with their pastors, exercise true leadership, both spiritually and pastorally. Priests should not be identified mainly as administrators, office workers and judges, but rather as brothers, guides, consolers and men of prayer. There is too often a distance that needs to be bridged between the faithful and the bishop, even between the bishop and his priests. The ministry of bishop and priest is a ministry of unity and communion which must become visible to the faithful.

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according to Vatican guidelines
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The Prelature's Reaction

The official Opus Dei response
to *Parents' Guide to Opus Dei*,
with commentary by J.J.M. Garvey

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Maxim 399 of "The Way": "If, to save an earthly life, it is praiseworthy to use force to keep a man from committing suicide, are we not allowed to use the same coercion — 'holy coercion' — in order to save the Lives of so many who are stupidly bent on killing their souls?"

QUESTION: Is it Opus Dei policy that "holy coercion" can be used in pursuit of potential members? Roman Catholic Canon Law 219 clearly prohibits *any* coercion in choosing or remaining in any state of life.

Maxim 941 of "The Way": "Obedience, the sure way. Blind obedience to your superior, the way of sanctity. Obedience in your apostolate the only way, for in a work of God, the spirit must be to obey or to leave."

QUESTION: Is blind obedience of its members to their superiors required, as the Founder states? The Catholic Church requires "full capacity, informed consent" for recruits and members of any Catholic group.

Maxim 644: "Be silent! Don't forget that your ideal [vocation to Opus Dei] is like a newly-lit flame. A single breath might be enough to put it out in your heart."

QUESTIONS: Is it policy that speaking of one's vocation to "the Work" is disallowed for the reason that the mere speaking of it will destroy it? How well prepared are the newly accepted members?

Maxim 650: "There are many people, holy people, who don't understand your way. Don't strive to make them understand. It would be a waste of time and would give rise to indiscretions."

QUESTIONS: Of the "many people, holy people, who don't understand your way," how many are parents or spouses? Why would it be a "waste of time" to try to explain to them what is going on? And, what kind of indiscretion is it that a "holy person" cannot understand?

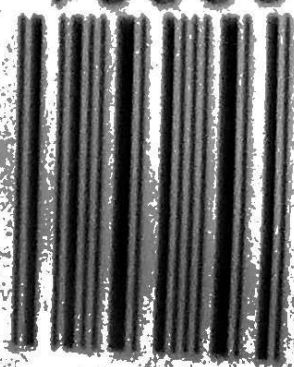
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